

Holiday Season

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

The holiday season is a special time of year, but unfortunately, it is also a time when busy people become careless and especially vulnerable to theft and other crimes. The following tips are designed to reduce your chances of becoming a victim of crime this holiday season and all year round.

STAY ALERT to your surroundings and the people around you. If you see an individual who looks suspicious “hanging around”, in a parking structure/lot, or the outside of a store, avoid the area. If possible, park your vehicle in an area of high pedestrian activity and **AVOID REMOTE AREAS**.

- Lock your car and close the windows, even if you are only gone for a few minutes. Many criminals are opportunists who simply stumble upon an unlocked vehicle.
- Don't leave valuables in plain view; conceal them under the seat or in your trunk.
- Even loose change left out in the open can be a temptation.
- Every year purses, wallets, laptop computers, and cell phones are stolen from vehicles. In most cases, the vehicle is locked with the item lying on the seat in plain view. In some cases, the vehicle is left unlocked.
- Place your valuables in the trunk **BEFORE** you get to your destination, not after because a thief may be watching you.

☞ If you need to wait for a ride from a friend or public transportation, do so in a busy, well lit location.

☞ Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible; and if the credit card receipt has carbons, ask for those too.

☞ Notify issuers immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen, or misused.

☞ Always report a theft to the law enforcement.

☞ When shopping with your children, teach them to go to the store clerk and ask for help if you become separated. They should never go to the parking lot or car alone.

☞ Don't be an easy target for a pickpocket.

- Carry a purse that can be secured, making it a difficult target for criminals.
- A wallet carried in your back pocket is an easy target for a pickpocket and can be removed without your knowledge. Consider carrying your wallet in a front pocket of your pants and place a comb in the fold of the wallet.

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- After you have completed a purchase, make sure you place your wallet and all of your credit cards back in your purse or pocket.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages, it is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion when you are walking out.
- At home, be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes.

- Use timers to turn on a radio and lights when you are not at home, this will give the appearance that someone is there.
- Avoid displaying holiday gifts and other valuables so that they are easily seen from your windows or doors.
- Always keep your porch light on from dusk to dawn.
- If you go away for the holidays, try to keep your home appearing "lived in".
- Have a neighbor watch your home and pick-up your newspapers and mail. Don't advertise that you are out of town on your phone's message machine or on social media.
- Use an automatic timer for your lights. Install a photocell or timer on all porch lights so that they turn on and off from dusk to dawn.
- Secure your garage door with a cane bolt or pad lock.

- If you use lights on your tree, make sure that they are in good working order and never leave them on when you are gone.
- After opening gifts, immediately mark them with some identifying detail, note all serial numbers, and keep these records in a safe place.

***Remember to be a good friend and neighbor this holiday season: Share these tips with your family and neighbors. Don't forget the elderly and other people who might be especially lonely during the holidays. Lastly, when hosting a party, find alternative transportation for intoxicated guests; and when going out drinking, please remember:
DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!***

These tips are provided by the Desoto County Sheriff's Department